



BLM News

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BLM/state/private land swap in the works for Emerald Mountain; Detailed maps available online on BLM web site

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CRAIG, CO-A grass roots effort in Routt County to open up Emerald Mountain to the public may result in the consolidation of Bureau of Land Management property while improving access to public lands. Emerald Mountain, 6,300 acres of land managed by the Colorado State Land Board, had been slated for sale as part of the state agency's fiscal mandate to generate revenue for the state's school system. The Emerald Mountain Partnership (EMP), comprised of local citizens, was formed in ?? to find an alternative to selling Emerald Mountain for residential or commercial development while still providing Colorado's school trust with the full value of the property.

The EMP, the Bureau of Land Management and the Colorado State Land Board have begun work on a possible land exchange that would trade scattered, inaccessible tracts of BLM land in Routt County for Emerald Mountain. The exchange would secure public ownership of Emerald Mountain and improve public access to BLM lands in Routt County.

Out of the lands that the BLM Little Snake Field Office identified, 15,224 acres are available for the exchange. The exchange will not be acre for acre, but rather value for value. The BLM parcels will be transferred to adjacent landowners and permittees in exchange for Emerald Mountain, with the State Land Board receiving cash from the new landowners.

Detailed maps and additional information on the proposal are available online at http://www.co.blm.gov/lspa/emerald_mtn/em.htm.

"The public stands to benefit the most from this exchange," said BLM Little Snake Field Manager John Husband. "This innovative partnership is being driven by local support and will consolidate BLM holdings in Routt County. We're delighted to be part of a local effort to manage public lands to meet local needs."

"These State Trust Lands are managed to generate revenue for Colorado's School Trust," said State Land Board Director Chris Castilian. "Having a local effort that allows us to meet our fiscal obligations to the people of Colorado while helping to meet the needs of the local community is certainly a worthwhile effort."

The BLM land identified for the exchange consists of small, isolated tracts with little or no public access. Of the 15,224 acres, 74 percent have no public access; while 13 percent are accessible only by foot or horseback and only 13 percent have public access from a road. The average size of the parcels identified for exchange is 30 acres.

"Historic settlement patterns in the West often led to small, isolated parcels of federal land that the public has little or no access to," Husband said. "This exchange provides a rare opportunity to trade those isolated parcels for an incredible mountain that lies at the heart of Routt County and the Steamboat Springs community. The vast majority of Routt County residents live within a 10-mile radius of Emerald Mountain. We have an opportunity to make management of BLM lands more efficient and effective, while meeting the needs and goals of the local community."

The exchange, if it proceeds, will be conducted as a public process. Exact figures on numbers of acres, participants, etc. are subject to change as the proposal moves forward. Federal regulations require environmental and cultural assessments of the proposal, which will be paid for by those acquiring BLM property through the exchange.

Some facts about the exchange:

- The feasibility study for the proposal is being finalized.
- Emerald Mountain is valued at \$16-17 million, based on a recent market analysis.
- The Western Land Group is facilitating the exchange.
- The future, private owners of BLM lands will pay the costs of the exchange.
- Approximately 50 adjacent landowners are negotiating for the BLM parcels identified for exchange.
- The 15,224 acres identified by the BLM includes 121 parcels.

For more information on the Emerald Mountain exchange, contact the Little Snake Field Office at 970-826-5000.

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